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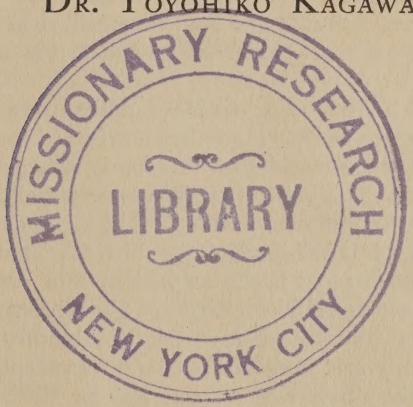
New Evangelistic Strategy in Japan

Dr. Toyohiko Kagawa



With Kagawa in a Thousand Villages

Dr. Kagawa delivered this address before the forty-third annual session of the Foreign Missions Conference of North America on January 8, 1936, at Asbury Park, New Jersey. Those present were so stirred by his vision of a thousand rural chapels in Japan, under native Christian leadership, that a special committee was appointed to make it possible for Dr. Kagawa's many friends to have a part in the erection of these community centers.

The committee, of which Dr. John R. Mott is chairman, will receive contributions toward these chapels or toward the rural training institute for lay leaders referred to in the address. Funds will be administered by the National Christian Council of Japan and Dr. Kagawa, with the advice of the Foreign Missions Conference of North America. Contributions may be sent to the Kagawa Rural Program in Japan, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York City. Further information may be secured by writing to this address.

NEW EVANGELISTIC STRATEGY IN JAPAN

Dr. Toyohiko Kagawa

I want to think about the new evangelistic strategy in Japan. Probably you have learned that in the last ten years we have had added to the Protestant churches about 150,000 new Christians. It means that we have about twice as many Christians as in former days. In the last week of November we decided to have another big national campaign which is the third stage of the Kingdom of God Movement. In Japan we are passing the so-called period of renaissance of religions. The Kingdom of God Movement gave a new stimulus to the various religions of Japan. Buddhism, Shintoism, all of the religions were revived. Unless we Christians in Japan are ready, the Shintoists and Buddhists will soon have a drastic grip on the young men of Japan. Nationalism too is very strong now.

Ten years ago children of Christian families were not asked to observe the Shinto ritualisms. Now they are forced to observe them. So, in the large cities the teaching of religion is very greatly stressed. For example, in the high schools in Tokyo, especially in the girls' schools, they observe religious weeks. The first day they study Buddhism, the second day Shintoism, the third Christianity. A great many girls are interested in Christian ethics. For example, a government school has about 150 members in the Christian club, while the Buddhist group hasn't so many and the Shintoist is small. It was reported recently that even among the government schools there are quite a good many boys who want to become Christians. It was a surprise to me. It shows that they are getting these ideas.

In spite of the nationalist movement being so strong in Japan, the young are not contented with that movement. When I arrived in Japan last July from Australia I was rather disappointed in the army influence in Japan. The University of Doshisha was forced to have a Shinto shrine in the rest room—they could not help it. But later I visited many cities in Japan and discovered that kind of influence is very little felt in different cities, that it is superficial. Ninety-nine per cent of the whole population is eager to get a real spiritual message. So I resumed the evangelistic campaign.

I was really surprised when I began to write Christian stories for the coöperatives. Previously the circulation had been 350,000 copies a month. After I began to write Christian stories, with coöperative stories, the circulation jumped to over a million copies a month. Even the peasants in the rural areas are not afraid of the Christian message, and I considered this the very best opportunity

of reaching the people in the country sections. Ten years ago they were afraid but now it is not so.

As you know, Buddhism has taken many of the forms of the Christian religion. They have the same type of ceremony and rituals as the Christian church, and many hymn books with almost the same hymns. In many places they read the Bible in the Buddhist temple. They put the cross of Jesus in their own religion. Quite a good many Buddhist leaders are embracing Christian teachings and are putting them in the Buddhist message.

But there is a danger. Unless we Christians give the substantial gospel to Japan, Buddhism will march on and will have great power in Japan. So we need some new strategy for evangelism. I say that we need three kinds of evangelism—spiritual, educational, and industrial evangelism. For the first we need personal evangelism, and we need mass evangelism and literature. As you know, the Japanese got their denominations from this country, and we have quite a good many churches in the heart of the cities. I have visited 126 cities within the last four years and discovered, practically speaking, four or five churches established in the heart of the city, in about one square mile. Beyond that and outside the city limits there are no churches. Really, we are wasting our power and energy for the gospel of Christ competing among the churches.

We have 9,600 villages and thirty million population in farming villages. We have only 170 preaching places or chapels among those 9,600 villages. We have 1,800 churches and chapels in the large towns and some of them are within a square mile. Sapporo is the center of Christian culture for Hokkaido, but one mile beyond the city the Christian influence is not felt at all. When we get to the downtown section we find no churches at all. In Osaka, the second city in Japan, with two and a half million population, there are about twenty districts and many of them have no churches. Higashi Yodogawa is wealthy and has many churches. Nishi Yodogawa, with a population of 100,000 has no churches at all. I don't know why the Japanese leaders want to settle their churches among the middle class people—probably they want to get their support quickly. But from the point of view of evangelism we are wasting our energy by concentrating in small areas. We need a large vision to send us to a wider area.

The question is asked, Do we need more missionaries? I say, do you think 30,000,000 people who have only 170 chapels have enough? And I know of only two cases where Christian evangelists are doing work among the one and one-half million fishermen. I have been working for many years toward this. We haven't the energy and power to put into evangelism for the fishermen. We need more power to do the rural evangelism, for the fishermen, and for indus-

trial workers. As the missionary forces are being withdrawn from Japan so quickly, it is very difficult to occupy the vacant places. We must recruit our forces for the vacant places where the missionary has been withdrawn.

Several years ago we started laymen's gospel schools for farmers and laborers. We have only 4,000 preachers and teachers in our forces, and half of them are engaged in education—only half are evangelists. We have no energy left to do more aggressive evangelism in rural and fishing sections. So our intention was to get the lay leaders who are self-supporting, who work in the daytime and in the evening are free to preach. I can assure you that we have good lay leaders who are eager to preach and to serve the people. I must confess that we have failed in some way to obtain a good theological seminary education. It has become too scholastic and some of the students do not see the need of the people and feel their sufferings. When they go from the seminaries to the rural areas they want to become scholars. Our training is not considered equal to the standing of the imperial universities, and the graduates of our seminaries want to continue their studies. They do not feel the sufferings of the people and the people do not trust them. I confess frankly that I am looking to those lay leaders to be the real leaders of Japan rather than the pastors.

I cannot invite ordinary seminary graduates as my helpers in the rural evangelism. Many of the graduates from the imperial university are Christians and have a wonderful interest. Many graduates have forgotten how to speak the Japanese language of the working people and the Japanese cannot understand their terminology. They are like a certain communist who was addressing a group in public some years ago, and when the attention of the police was called to him the police said they were not afraid of what he might say—his terminology was too difficult and the people could not understand him. We have that situation now in Japan, among the theological seminary graduates.

If we could get about 5,000 lay leaders right now we could occupy those fields from which the missionaries have withdrawn. So our method is to start a farmers' gospel school, lasting a week, in which we ask pastors and specialists to come and help us. We have many Christian professors in the different universities who are willing to serve free of charge. Often they even pay their own transportation. In Hokkaido we bought a lot, paying 1,500 Yen, and invited professors of the Imperial University, influenced by Professor Clark. Since we provided the place, they were willing to come free of charge and paid their own transportation.

If we can provide the classrooms and equipment, students will come from far and wide. One boy came from Hokkaido, about

2,000 miles on foot, spending 100 days, his intention being to attend the gospel school in Kobe. This shows how eager they are to get the gospel. We teach four things: (1) New Testament; (2) the history of Christian brotherhood. We do not teach history of discussions or of doctrines at all! (3) We teach the new methods of agriculture, with the tree crops proposed by Professor James Russell Smith* of Columbia University. I call it Biblical agriculture. Starting with Genesis, we speak about the need of the trees of life. We tell the story of Abel's methods—more sheep and goats. Our agriculture has hitherto depended solely on fields and rice, ignoring the mountain slopes. Eighty-five per cent of Japan is mountainous and we need to encourage the growth of food-bearing trees.

We tell the story of the land where milk and honey flow. If we can get the bees and goats we can get the land where milk and honey flow. They like that story very much. I advocate the importation of milk goats from Switzerland. They elected me president of the goat association!

(4) We teach rural sociology. We teach four things in the morning and we practice it in the afternoon. We teach them how to graft, to care for bee hives, to can condensed milk, and how to make ham and bacon. We have over 5,700,000 families of farmers and seventy per cent of them are tenants and very poor; they receive less than 400 Yen a year, less than $100 in American money. They are miserably poor, so we must teach them how to support their families, and we cannot ask contributions for the church unless we teach them how they can do it. So we teach them to plant trees and we ask them to give one-tenth of the crops of the trees to our work.

Now we have about a hundred gospel schools scattered throughout Japan, and we find this is the real method to approach the farmers. We are now extending our plans for more schools. Our object is to capture the 9,600 villages. I am planning to get about one hundred villages each year and in ten years I plan to have one thousand churches organized in the Japanese villages. Ordinarily it is very cheap to build wooden churches to hold about 150 persons. With about $300 American money you can build a big, beautiful building. Three hundred thousand dollars would provide one thousand churches. In the daytime we will use them for day nurseries, evenings for night schools, on Sundays for church services, and in the winter for agricultural schools.

I wish you would provide that $300,000 to complete the 1,000 churches experiment. You provide five million dollars for one hospital, and it looks fine, but of course it costs much to keep it up, and

* See *Tree Crops* and *The Food Resources of the World,* books by Professor Smith, published in Japanese by Dr. Kagawa.

other places are suffering. Schools also cost much, but if we don't keep them up they lose prestige. Government schools are better. Girls' schools are in better condition than boys' schools. The government has wonderful schools and our Christian schools are getting behind the times so that only bad boys come to the Christian schools, and we lose prestige more and more. We have only seventeen Christian schools for boys. We had better destroy those poor schools which haven't sufficient equipment to compete with government schools. If we want to have good Christian prestige, let us keep up with the times. This is the time to change technique. Let us have small gospel schools in the cities and towns and in the villages for training lay leaders.

I am asking many missionaries to go to the small towns. Usually they like missionaries. Missionaries in Japan are angels—really so. I must confess we Japanese pastors become like Confucian teachers, too dignified to approach—we become superior to the common people and we lose the chance to get in touch with them. Missionaries have good intentions and have great power to get love into the hearts of the young men. It is not necessary for them to have broadcasting ability. The missionaries need to have heart-to-heart contacts with these students, and will help to make a great future for Japan. The missionaries are being withdrawn from Japan so fast that we don't know what to do. During the World War the German forces knew how to retreat, but you have not prepared to withdraw. Start your gospel schools quickly and get lay leaders and finish your work; and if the missionaries must be withdrawn, support lay leaders there first. I repeated that story some years ago to American visitors and they gave money to start the Aogama Gospel School. But then you had a big panic and that subsidy stopped, so I am supporting it myself.

The gospel means everything in Japan: It means five types of administration—physical, educational, political, economical and social. If the gospel does not provide those five kinds, why, then there will be Buddhism or something else. We must prove that the gospel is the cross of Jesus, not only in our talk, but we must demonstrate it in our own bodily existence. Graduates of the Tokyo Gospel School are now trying to support it out of their own money, and for each school it costs only about $200 a year.

We need two kinds of gospel schools—those for farmers and fishermen, and those in the city. The graduates of both these types of schools, rural and city, are wonderful teachers of the gospel. I wish God would give us about five thousand of those lay leaders.

We need industrial evangelism. For many years I have been laying emphasis on the new sort of evangelism according to trades. Labor unions united by industries and craftsmen are nearer together than the ordinary people in a mass. Among nurses we started a

mission for nurses only. In Japan the standing of nurses is very inferior to that of the common people. I wish some mission board would send some special missionaries to approach those nurses of which we have about 50,000. When those nurses get the fire from Christ they become good evangelists among the sick people. If we could only build a home for nurses! My own private home is made a home for nurses; we invited them from the leper asylums to come and rest in my own home, for they have no good place to rest. I wish some missionaries would devote full time to those nurses, visiting from town to town.

I would ask you to send a special missionary to serve the fishermen. They are miserably poor. Three years ago I wrote a fiction story to arouse the sympathy of Japan. Our territory is so narrow, we haven't pasture land, so we eat more fish. But the fishermen are poorer than the slum folks. The gospel started from the sons of Zebedee, but in Japan the sons of Zebedee are not approached. I wish you would resume that wonderful achievement of Captain Bickel again. I wish we could have at least one good gospel mission for fishermen.

I wish you would start one mission for carpenters. Jesus was a carpenter—can't we have one special missionary or evangelist to approach the carpenters in Japan? So with the clerks in the offices. This is the time to approach the industries. So with the railroads. We had a railroad mission but some of the missionaries have been withdrawn. So for the teachers. We have need of missionaries for teachers of common schools. We have 250,000 primary school teachers and they are eager to get the message of Christ, because they have heard the story of Pestallozzi and of Froebel. If they get it they can spread it to the young men in the districts. I have been praying for many years for that work, but have not yet gotten it. We need a magazine to give the gospel to the common school teachers. We can expand our movement then to high school teachers. As you know, formerly we had missionaries for seamen; it is almost abandoned now. Also machine workers.

We must have gospel workers trade by trade. Communists are working on that line and we must employ the same strategy with the gospel. We must have a Christian brotherhood movement. Buddhism is a great religion but it has not love. Confucianism is fine but no love. Christianity has the gospel and Jesus told us to love other people; he laid stress on that. Unless we can love people, the Japanese are not willing to accept the gospel; so I want to get more enthusiasm for the Christian brotherhood movement. It does not cost much money. But brotherhood is only possible working through the trades. We ought not to have strikes. We want brotherly kindness and to love each other and start gospel schools.

The Japanese government is very poor and so asks the ordinary people to start coöperative associations. In this country you probably don't like coöperatives in the churches, because some rich people are against them. But in Japan the Japanese people understand that without these movements their people cannot thrive. For example, Doshisha University has asked me to become the professor of the coöperative movement, to teach the coöperative movement to the seminary students. And West Japan Union University is following suit. Each of the imperial government universities has three or four chairs for the different types of consumers coöperatives, credit unions, and so forth. Even high schools have training for coöperatives. Even the primary schools have asked for this kind of training in the coöperative movement.

I was distressed because in coming over here some church leaders do not understand the coöperative movement. If the evangelists of the Christian church do not understand the coöperative scheme they have no right to teach the gospel in Japan. This coöperative movement is the love scheme to apply the gospel in action to the Japanese people. When the preacher does not understand this they think he is a very funny fellow—if he doesn't know the coöperative movement; if he knows it, then he has a big job to do in Japan. I wish all the missionaries who come to Japan would study the coöperative movement before they reach Japan.

So I have spoken of spiritual, educational, rural and industrial evangelism. And I wish you would pray for us, for we are very eager to capture the whole nation of Japan for Christ. We are praying to get 1,000 churches in ten years, and we are praying that we may if possible double the number of Christians within ten years.

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